

be able to claim that is acting responsibly on behalf of American citizens.

In closing Mr. President, I would like to urge my colleagues to support the Federal Research Investment Act. I further challenge each of you to reach out to your own universities and engage them in this critical dialogue as to the future of science and technology funding. This federal funding, after all, is a public investment in America's future.●

TRADE SANCTIONS COMPENSATION

● Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, yesterday I introduced a bill to compensate farmers if we choose to continue using food as a weapon. I do not support the use of food in this way, but if this country chooses to use food as a weapon, then the producers of that weapon deserve to be compensated, just as all other weapons manufacturers are compensated.

Today, ten percent of the world's wheat markets are off limits to American farmers because of sanctions. If we include the recent loss of the markets in Pakistan and India, sixteen percent of the world's markets are not available. Farmers in my state, and farmers across this nation, cannot afford to pay for this foreign policy option out of their own pockets.

This bill amends an existing statute which is so narrowly drawn that, despite ongoing sanctions, the statute has not required any compensation to farmers. The existing statute requires that the sanction be imposed by the executive branch of government, be unilateral, and not be joined by any other nation. It also limits compensation to three years and allows the Secretary of Agriculture to choose between direct compensation and export assistance programs.

This bill eliminates all of the restrictions in the existing statute which preclude it from being of any assistance to farmers hit by declining prices caused by lost export markets. The new statute will make it clear that, if our government chooses to use food as a weapon, then those who produce that food will not alone bear the financial burden. I ask that my colleagues join me in passage of this bill to ensure fairness in our foreign trade policy.●

THE PROGRAM FOR INVESTMENT IN MICRO-ENTREPRENEURS OF 1998

● Mr. KERRY. Last week I joined Senators KENNEDY, DOMENICI and BINGAMAN in introducing a bill to establish the PRIME program for investment in microenterprise. I applaud Senators KENNEDY and DOMENICI for their work in developing this legislation and welcome their efforts in supporting the development of business skills for micro-entrepreneurs. Access to education and training is critical for the development of small businesses in the United States.

Developing microenterprise is crucial to the financial health of our nation. Small businesses have been the engine of growth in our economy and have provided virtually all of our country's net new jobs. Very small businesses, those with four or fewer employees, created more jobs from 1992 through 1996 than large businesses employing more than 500 workers. However, many of those who yearn to turn an innovative idea into a marketable product need assistance in developing the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in today's competitive marketplace. That is why, as Ranking Democratic Member of the Senate Small Business Committee, I have been such a strong supporter of programs to assist microenterprise development, especially through the microloan program within the Small Business Administration. This program has provided \$67 million in microloans to very small businesses in every state. A great percentage of microloans have gone to traditionally underserved groups, including 43 percent to women-owned businesses, 39 percent to minority-owned businesses and 11 percent to veteran-owned businesses. I am committed to seeing this and other programs that assist microenterprise grow and thrive.

The Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) fund represents another type of community investment initiative. It uses limited federal resources to invest in and build the capacity of private, for profit and nonprofit financial institutions, leveraging private capital and private-sector talent and creativity. The fund's main program allows local CDFIs to apply for financial and technical assistance. This funding can be used to support basic financial services, housing for low-income people, businesses that provide jobs for low-income people and technical assistance for capacity-building, training, and development of programs, investments or loans. The CDFI fund offers a combination of increased access to capital and institutional capacity building that is vital to low-income communities, and fill a need that the marketplace is not meeting.

We have all heard a lot about the need for individual responsibility, family responsibility, and community responsibility. The microenterprise program within CDFI give us an opportunity to lend a helping hand to those in need of financial aid and technical assistance so they can fulfill their personal, family, and community responsibilities. It has given many a chance to break the cycle of poverty and welfare and move toward individual responsibility and financial independence.

The PRIME bill introduced last week seeks to increase CDFI's funding for technical assistance to give micro-entrepreneurs access to information on developing a business plan, record-keeping, planning, financing and marketing that are crucial in the develop-

ment of a small business. Furthermore, this legislation will sponsor research on the most innovative and successful ways of encouraging these new businesses and enabling them to succeed.

This legislation will allow organizations which assist microenterprises to develop new products and services for their customers and expand on existing services. In Massachusetts, Working Capital, a recipient of a Presidential Award for Excellence in Microenterprise Development in 1997, currently offers three complementary programs to its microenterprise customers which could be eligible for additional funding under the PRIME legislation. First, Working Capital provides business credit to micro-entrepreneurs. Second, they provide business education and training on how to draw up business plans and prepare financial projections, and how to use these tools in managing their businesses. Third, they offer networking opportunities to connect micro-entrepreneurs to each other and give them a sense of belonging within a community which faces the same challenges.

The PRIME legislation will assist in the development of programs such as those offered by Working Capital in Massachusetts and similar organizations across the country and will assist more Americans in taking a chance on the American dream of owning their own small business. I look forward to working with my colleagues to enact this important legislation.●

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 2614

Mr. LOTT. I now ask unanimous consent the Senate turn to Calendar No. 404, H.R. 2614, the Reading Excellence Act, and immediately following the reporting by the clerk, the chairman be recognized to withdraw the committee amendment and there be 30 minutes for debate to be equally divided in the usual form with no amendments or motions in order.

I further ask that following the conclusion or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on passage of H.R. 2614, all without any intervening action or debate.

I would like to note that I have discussed this with White House officials, and they have urged that we try to find a way to get this legislation up. Actually, this was a week or two ago, so we have been trying to get something worked out. I would like very much for us to be able to do that.

Mr. FORD. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, and I do not have any caveat to the unanimous-consent agreement, but would the majority leader modify his request to include an amendment from the Democratic side which would be the only amendment in order, and that it be the text of the committee-reported substitute amendment as modified; that there would be 1 hour for debate on the amendment equally divided, and that upon the use